



# MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** ★★ ★

## Organize a Book and School Supply Drive



### The Challenge



Literacy is one of the most important skills needed to succeed in our society. Regardless of where you live, access to books or the materials needed to learn is a challenge for some children. Providing access to books and school supplies for underserved children helps to reduce a major barrier to learning.

This toolkit will help you to address this community need by:

- Explaining associated terms
- Highlighting helpful resources
- Sharing effective planning steps
- Outlining project management tips
- Providing ideas for communicating your message
- Sharing tips for reflection and reporting



### Prepare

#### *Learn Associated Terms*

Before you jump-start the planning phase of your project, be sure you know the terms associated with the work you are about to do.

- **Literacy:** More than just reading and writing, [UNESCO](http://en.unesco.org/) (<http://en.unesco.org/>) defines literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.
- **Illiteracy:** The quality of having little or no education, especially



being unable to read or write.

- **American Library Association:** The American Library Association (ALA) is the oldest and largest library association in the world, providing association information, news, events, and advocacy resources for members, librarians, and library users.

## Identify a Location

**Recipient organizations:** Groups such as [libraries](http://www.ala.org/tools/libfactsheets/alalibraryfactsheet12) (<http://www.ala.org/tools/libfactsheets/alalibraryfactsheet12>), local schools and after-school programs, or community centers need books and many of the youth they serve need school supplies. Identify organizations in your community and find out what kind of books or school supplies they need. Also contact [your state public library](http://www.publiclibraries.com/state_library.htm) ([http://www.publiclibraries.com/state\\_library.htm](http://www.publiclibraries.com/state_library.htm)).

**For a book/school supply drive:** Identify bookstores and other businesses that sell books and school supplies. Ask if they might want to partner with you—they can encourage their customers to purchase books or needed supplies for donation while shopping. Also visit [DonorsChoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org/) (<http://www.donorschoose.org/>) to view classroom wish lists.

**Organizing books and supplies:** If your book or school supply drive is successful, you will need a location with plenty of room to organize and sort donated items. Consider schools, community centers, houses of worship, college/university meeting spaces.

### Browse Helpful Resources

- [Book drive ideas](http://www.readtogrow.org/images/customer-files/toolkit2010.pdf) (<http://www.readtogrow.org/images/customer-files/toolkit2010.pdf>)
- [Start a free little library](http://www.littlefreelibrary.org/) (<http://www.littlefreelibrary.org/>) in your community
- [Order free MLK Day bookmarks](https://pubs.nationalservice.gov/) (<https://pubs.nationalservice.gov/>) to hand out to participants
- Learn about [virtual book drives](http://www.firstbook.org/get-involved/virtual-book-drives) (<http://www.firstbook.org/get-involved/virtual-book-drives>)
- [Tips for kids running a drive](http://www.dosomething.org/actnow/actionguide/11-tips-how-have-a-collection-drive) (<http://www.dosomething.org/actnow/actionguide/11-tips-how-have-a-collection-drive>)
- Heart America Foundation [step-by-step information on running book drives](http://www.heartofamerica.org/helpprovidebooks.htm) (<http://www.heartofamerica.org/helpprovidebooks.htm>)
- Serve.gov [Tip Sheet for Running a Successful Book Drive](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/toolkits/book-drive/four) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/toolkits/book-drive/four>)



## Plan

Set reachable goals, and act with inspiration and purpose.

### Build a Team

- Start off planning with folks you know, and ask them to tell others to join your efforts.
- Consider inviting representatives of recipient organizations such as schools or libraries as well as donor organizations such as bookseller or discount store personnel to join your team.
- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- As you work, talk about the parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s impact and your own.



### *Set Goals*

## **Build your planning team**

Whether you are a team of few or many, a planning team will help you execute all aspects of your project. Below are some roles your planning team can take on. If it's only you: reach out to volunteers past and present to fulfill these roles:

- Project Development
  - Volunteer Recruitment and Management Team
  - Communications Team
  - VIP/Leadership Engagement Team
  - Fundraising Team
  - Event Team
- Set goals, such as number of books or supplies collected, number of organizations or students receiving books, number of booksellers that participated.
  - Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. Ensure you and your team choose goals you can all agree on.

### *Plan Your Project*

A book and school supply drive is a multi-day process that you might kick off or wrap up on the MLK Day of Service.

- If you are partnering with businesses that sell books and school supplies, agree to a set range of dates during which they will promote the donation opportunity to their customers. Provide a list of books/supplies needed.
- During this same time period, promote the book drive or school supply drive to the larger community by distributing lists of need books or school supplies and setting up drop-off locations.
- If MLK Day is a kick off to a book or supply drive that will continue, the day could be focused on educating people in the community about the need for books and supplies, the recipient organizations, and the locations where they might buy and donate books or school supplies.

- Alternatively, if items were collected in advance of MLK Day, use the day as a massive drop off day when volunteer are available to collect, sort, and organize the books or supplies into pre-determined groupings, placing each in set containers (backpacks, if you have them, or other bags).
- Have volunteers craft short handwritten notes to put in with the school supplies or books. Solicit ideas from the team and be sure to turn to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and words for inspiration.
- What is the plan for distributing books and supplies? If you're dropping off at multiple locations, group books and supplies according to their destinations and make arrangements to transport the books. If kids/families will be coming to pick up supplies, make sure to advertise the pick-up event.
- **Incorporate learning into any service you do** ([node/292](#)) by sharing information about the issues your project addresses and about Dr. King's work and teachings as it relates to the issue.  
(<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/>)

### *Raise Resources or Equipment/Supplies*

## **Involving and engaging kids**

Whether kids show up to volunteer or they unexpectedly arrive with parents who can benefit from your service, have activities that they can do such as:

- Carry light objects
- Decorate cards, lunch bags, or placemats
- Serve refreshments to the adults hard at work
- Organize or tidy the project spaces
- Watch a film about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

See [Engaging Kids in Service \(node/296\)](#) for more on kid-friendly service projects.

What supplies will you need to promote a book or school supply drive in your community?

- Seek financial and in-kind donations from businesses for the supplies you'll need to run your project
- Solicit funds from team members and/or others to purchase items you need for successful MLK Day
- Purchase the necessary supplies prior to the service day so they're ready to go on MLK Day.

### *Manage Your Project*

The following tips will assist you with managing a successful service project.

- Utilize to do lists for the days leading up to, day of and post event day.
- Make sure team leaders or coordinators are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet

volunteers or community members as they arrive.

- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event: gathering school supplies and books for children who need it most in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Organize volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greeting participants, handing out refreshments, responding to questions, or distributing information about the types of books/supplies being collected or about the recipient organization.
- Build moments of reflection into your planned activities. Share stories and words from Dr. King and about any insights you've gained so far [about the connection between your service and Dr. King's teachings \(node/292\)](#).
- Document the day with photos and videos and be sure to have participants sign a photo release form.
- Conduct your event, offering continuous encouragement to participants.



## Communicate Your Message

Communication is a key part of any service project. You will need to communicate about:

- Getting volunteers to help you plan or implement your service activity
- Building Partnerships with potential collaborators or sponsors
- Raising funds or in-kind donations for your project
- Informing potential participants who might benefit from your service



Publicize your event using a combination of low-tech outreach, traditional, and social media.

### *Low-tech Outreach*

- Post flyers in public places
- Use community bulletin boards
- Ask area businesses to spread the word (e.g. flyers at registers or posters in store windows)
- Make announcements at schools, churches, or civic groups

### *Traditional Media*

- Invite the news media (print and broadcast) to report about your upcoming event or to attend and share information about accomplishments. Use a [press release \(node/252\)](#) or a [media advisory \(node/252\)](#).
- Make follow-up phone calls to the news media
- Place free ads in the community affairs section of your local papers

### *Digital and Social Media*

- Submit your event to local online calendars and LISTSERVs
- Promote your project, and document the day, through Facebook, Tweets, and pictures
- Reach out to a local blogger and ask if he/she might cover the event



## Share Impact

### *Assess and Reflect*

Host an official debriefing meeting for team members after the service day. Ask the team to reflect on the following questions:

- Examine the goals you set for yourselves. Which ones did you meet? Which exceeded your expectations? And which goals did you not quite reach?
- What did you accomplish?
- Who did your work impact in your community?
- What went well and what could be improved for next time?
- What book or school supply drive resources or outreach methods would you use again in the future? Which ones would you forego?
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Go back to your initial investigation into the local problems you elected to help tackle and ask more questions. For example, if you distributed books or supplies in your community, what other services could you provide to students to help promote literacy? What other organizations or programs in your community could you offer your help to?



### *Share Your Story*

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize a book or school supply drive once they hear what you accomplished. Share your service accomplishments with:

- Volunteers, financial and in-kind supporters and constituents groups; the accomplishments could accompany a thank you letter
- The media; thank all media who reported on your planned activities or covered you service project along with sharing accomplishments from the project and any plans for the future
- The Corporation for National and Community Service; learn about multiple ways to [share your story](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share>)

32 reads

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